Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Mayor

COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Tom Liebel, Chairman

Chris Ryer
Director

DRAFT STAFF REPORT

November 10, 2020

REQUEST: 1525 N. Charles Street – Pennsylvania Station (Baltimore City Landmark): Exterior Rehabilitation and Restoration

RECOMMENDATION: Approval, with final details to be approved at staff level

STAFF: Lauren Schiszik

APPLICANT: Penn Station Partners, LLC (owner), Quinn Evans (architect)

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

This property is located between the 1500 blocks of Charles and St. Paul Streets, just north of the Jones Falls Expressway and the Jones Falls (*Maps 1 and 2*). The railyard extends north from the station to a steep embankment, north of which sits a surface parking lot. Pennsylvania Station occupies a visually prominent position on a natural embankment at the approximate geographic center of the city. This was the site of two earlier train stations. When the present station was constructed in 1911, Baltimore ranked as the seventh busiest rail center in the country, and the station symbolizes the culmination of the first period of railroad development in this country (*Map 3*). Originally named "Union Station", in 1929, the name was changed to Pennsylvania Station.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description: Pennsylvania Station was designed in the Beaux-Arts Classism style by New York architect Kenneth W. Murchison (*Images 1 and 2*). The building is seventeen bays wide and three bays deep, with four stories above grade and two level below grade. The structure retains all of its character-defining features, including its overall form, openings, and details, such as the frieze on the façade featuring medallions with carved eagles flanking an eight-foot diameter terra-cotta clock, the cast iron and glass canopies that wrap the façade, doors, windows, spandrel panels, granite exterior, and more. The north elevation mirrors the façade, and also features a T-shaped concourse that extends from the main block of the building through which passengers access the train sheds (*Images 3-7).* Original historic materials at the train sheds include the cast iron columns and terra-cotta tiles on the walls. When it was originally constructed, it was an impressive structure, and remains so today.

BACKGROUND

- Pennsylvania Station was designated as a Baltimore City Landmark in 1977.

- There have been previous reviews of this property at the staff level for minor repairs, and at the full Commission for major alterations, such as the site work for the traffic circle and installation of the Male/Female sculpture in 2004.
- This project is being completed as a part of redevelopment by Amtrak and private partners. This historic station will be redeveloped with new retail on the first floor and office space on the upper floors. A new station will be constructed to the north of this structure, and a new rail line will be constructed in order to accommodate the increased demand for rail service.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The applicant proposes to complete a comprehensive rehabilitation and restoration of the exterior of the historic train station. In general, the exterior will be restored, with features cleaned and repaired in accordance with preservation guidelines. The restoration scope of work will include:

- Clean the pink granite and terracotta exterior
- Repoint mortar joints as needed to match existing
- Clean and restore metal spandrel panels, or if deteriorated beyond repair, replace in kind to match existing
- Clean and restore cast iron and glass canopy at entrance; replace cast iron that is deteriorated beyond repair in kind to match existing, replace glass that is cracked or missing in kind to match existing
- Clear and restore cast iron lighting on façade
- Restore all existing historic doors
- Restore all existing historic windows on first, second, and third floors; replace to match existing in only a few cases where the windows are deteriorated beyond repair.
- Replace non-historic metal windows on fourth floor with aluminum-clad wood windows that match the configuration from the original building plans.
- Install six missing skylights in concourse roof
- Replace standing seam metal roof on main building in kind
- On train sheds, replace deteriorated concrete roof decks, restore cast iron canopy columns where feasible and cast new columns to match existing where needed, replace skylights, clean and restore terra-cotta tiles, restore and reuse historic railings, where missing, replicate to match existing.

In addition to this extensive restoration scope of work, there will be a few minor alterations, consisting of window openings being converted to doorways – one opening on the first floor, and a few on the fourth floor, which is not visible from the street due to the set back of the fourth floor and the balustrade on the top of the third floor.

The proposed alterations are being considered under the Baltimore City Historic Preservation Design Guidelines *Chapter 1: Design Guidelines for Building Exteriors,* Sections 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, and 1.11.

Conformity to Guidelines

Section 1.1 Identifying and Preserving Historic Building Fabric:

- Identify and assess character-defining features when considering changes to a historic building. Retain character-defining features, such as roof shape, openings for doors and windows, and unique detailing, when repairing, maintaining, or altering a historic building.
- Repair deteriorated historic fabric rather than replace it whenever possible. Do not modify or alter significant architectural features during the repair process.
- Replace architectural materials and features that are deteriorated beyond repair with new materials and features that visually match the original.
    - The proposal meets all guidelines.

Section 1.2.2 Masonry Cleaning:

- Use the gentlest means possible when cleaning, such as a low-pressure water spray (100-400 psi) and natural-bristle brushes. Under-clean rather than over-clean.
- Only use proper commercial masonry cleaning agents.
    - The proposal meets these guidelines.

Section 1.2.4 Mortar:

- Repoint deteriorated joints only. The removal of all joints in order to achieve a uniform appearance is discouraged as this often results in damage to historic masonry.
- Remove unsound mortar to a depth of two-and one-half times the width of the joint, or to sound mortar, whichever is greater.
- Replacement mortar should be compatible with historic masonry and the original mortar mix. Portland cement mortars are not appropriate for buildings constructed prior to c. 1900.
- Replacement mortar must match historic mortar joints in color, texture, joint size, profile, and hardness.

Section 1.4.1 Metals, General:

- Retain and repair existing metal features whenever possible. Repair metal surfaces using methods, materials, and techniques appropriate to the specific type of metal.
- Replace only those portions of metal features that exhibit significant deterioration. Replace materials and features in kind, whenever possible.
- Replace missing metal features with new elements based on historical, pictorial, or physical evidence. If no such evidence is available, replacement features should be of a compatible new design, rather than a conjectural historical reconstruction. New metal features should be compatible in size, scale, material, and color with the historic building.
    - The proposal meets these guidelines.

Section 1.6.1 Doors - General:

- Preserve, repair, and maintain historic doors, doorway and entryway features that contribute to the building's architectural character, such as hardware, fanlights, sidelights, pilasters, entablatures, columns, balustrades, and stairs.
- In most cases do not create new entrances on primary facades. Locate new openings on walls that will result in the minimal loss of historic materials and features. Design new openings to be compatible in size, scale, shape, proportion, material, and massing with the existing building features.
    - The proposal meets this guideline.

Section 1.7.2 Window Repair:

- Repair deteriorated window components whenever possible. Do not replace historic windows unless they are deteriorated beyond repair. Replacement may be considered for lead-based paint hazards on accessible, friction or impact surfaces. Replacement windows must meet CHAP Window Replacement Guidelines.
    - The proposal meets this guideline.

Section 1.7.3 Window Replacement:

- Replacement windows shall match the historic windows in size, type, configuration, form, detail, and overall appearance.
- Replacement windows must fit properly within the original opening, and replicate the dimensions and profiles of the sash, frames and muntins. Do not reduce the size or change the shape of historic windows or window openings.
    - The proposal meets all of these guidelines.

Section 1.8.2: Roof Replacement:

- Replacement metal roofing must match the original layout, configuration, and appearance of the seams and trim.
    - The proposal meets these guidelines.

Section 1.8.7: Skylights:

- Retain existing historic skylights whenever possible. Where replacement is necessary, retain the size, location, and shape of the historic skylight.
    - The proposal meets these guidelines.

Section 1.11: Lighting:

- Preserve, protect, and retain historic light fixtures. Original light fixtures can be upgraded, rewired, and refinished for continued use.
    - The proposal meets these guidelines.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

Pennsylvania Station is not located within a CHAP district; therefore, comments from an Architectural Review Committee are not applicable. However, the surrounding community

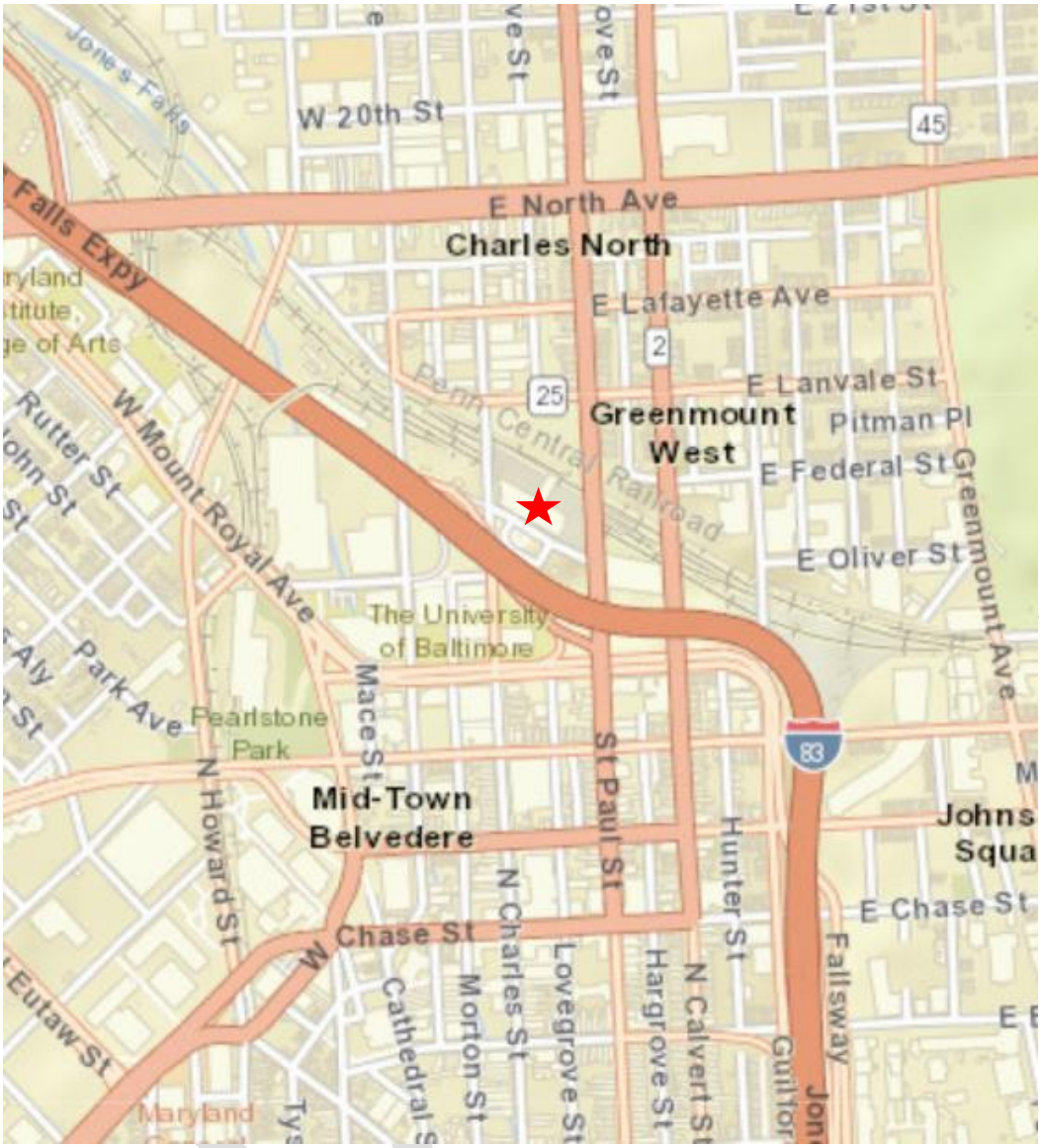
associations and organizations were notified of this project and hearing: Charles-North Community Association, Midtown Community Benefits District, Baltimore Heritage, Inc., Baltimore National Heritage Area, Baltimore AIA, Preservation Maryland.

ANALYSIS
CHAP staff has reviewed the submission and finds that the proposal meets CHAP guidelines.

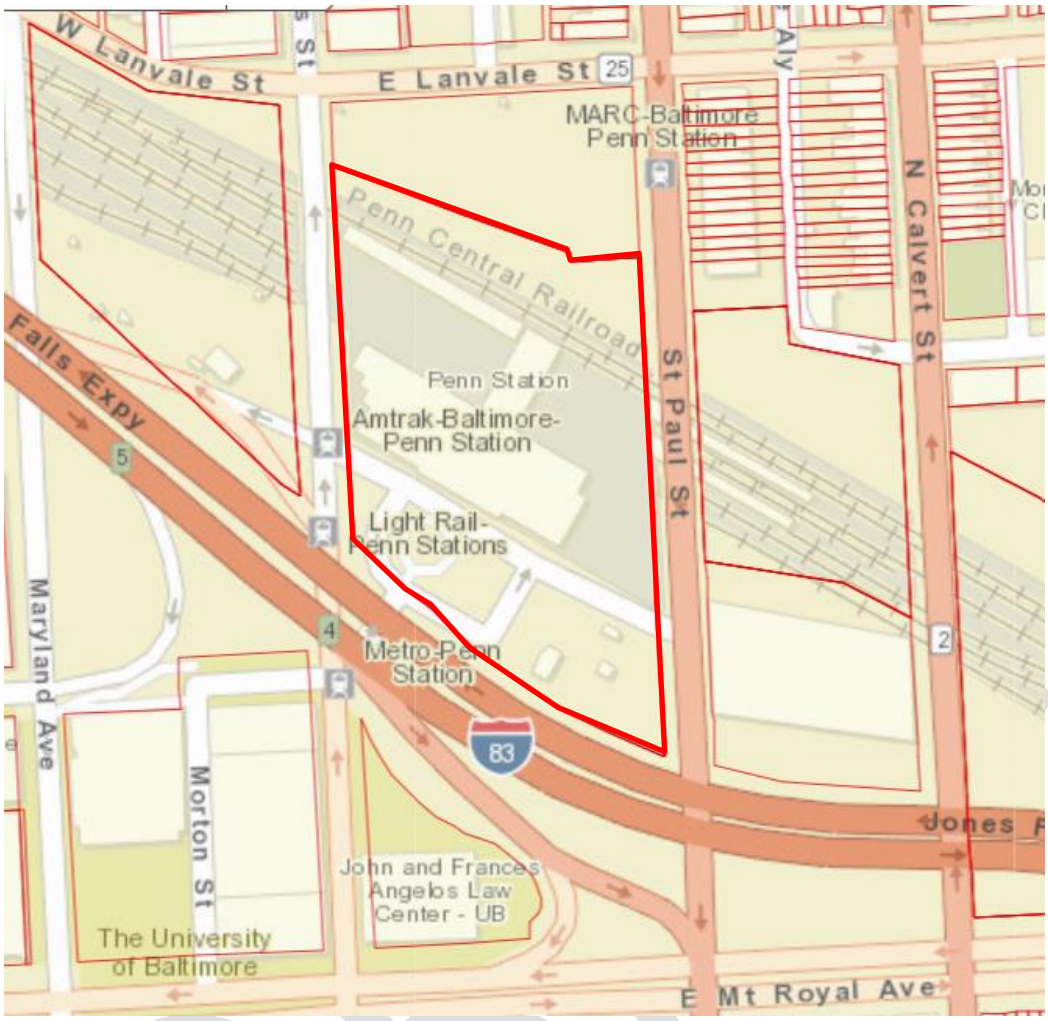
RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval, with final details to be approved at staff level.

Eric Holcomb
Executive Director

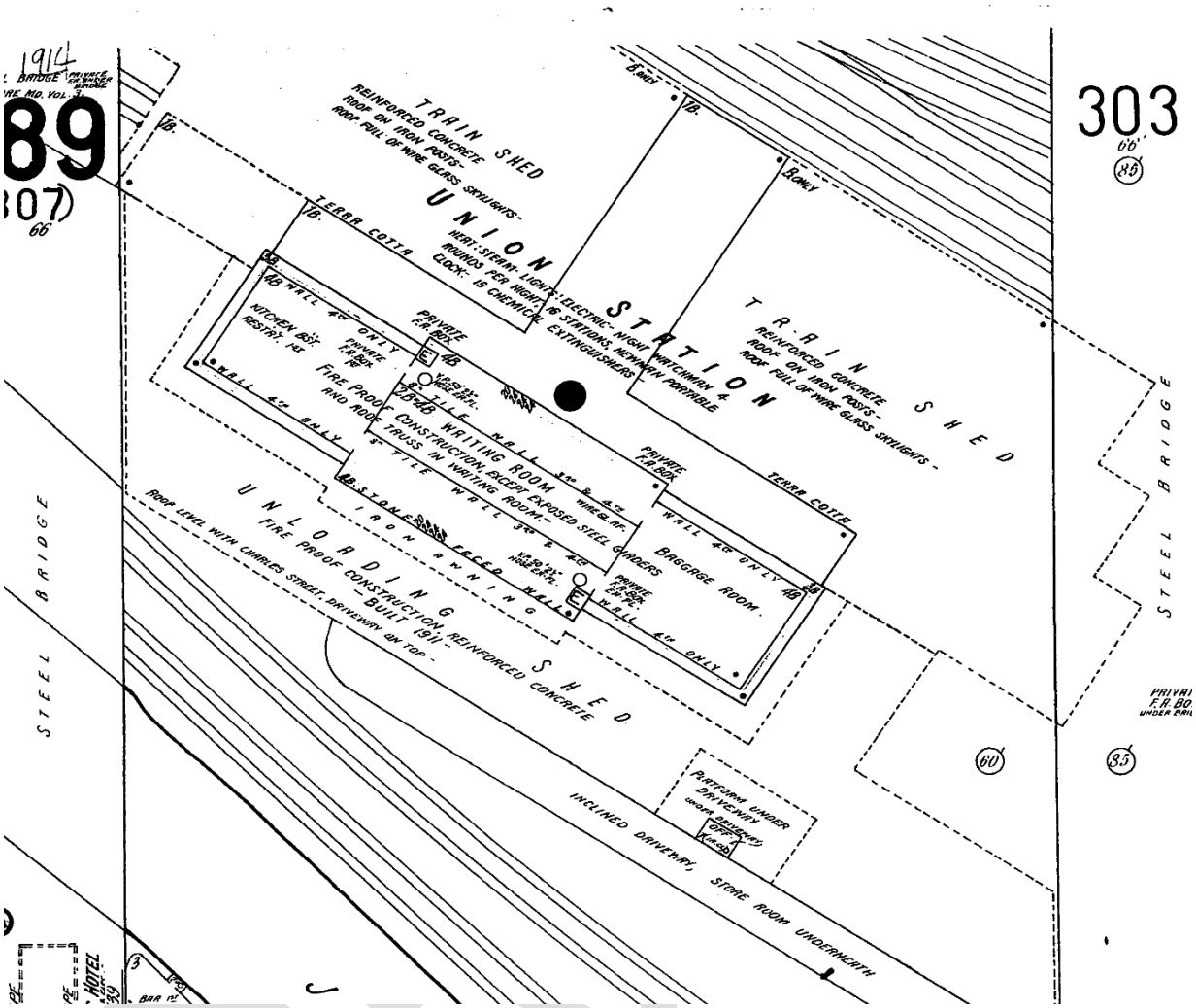
MAPS AND IMAGES



Map 1: Location of Pennsylvania Station, 1525 N. Charles St., marked with red star.



Map 2: Detailed location map of the Pennsylvania Station, with the property outlined in red.



Map 3: Detail of Pennsylvania Station in the 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, (Volume 3, Sheet 289).

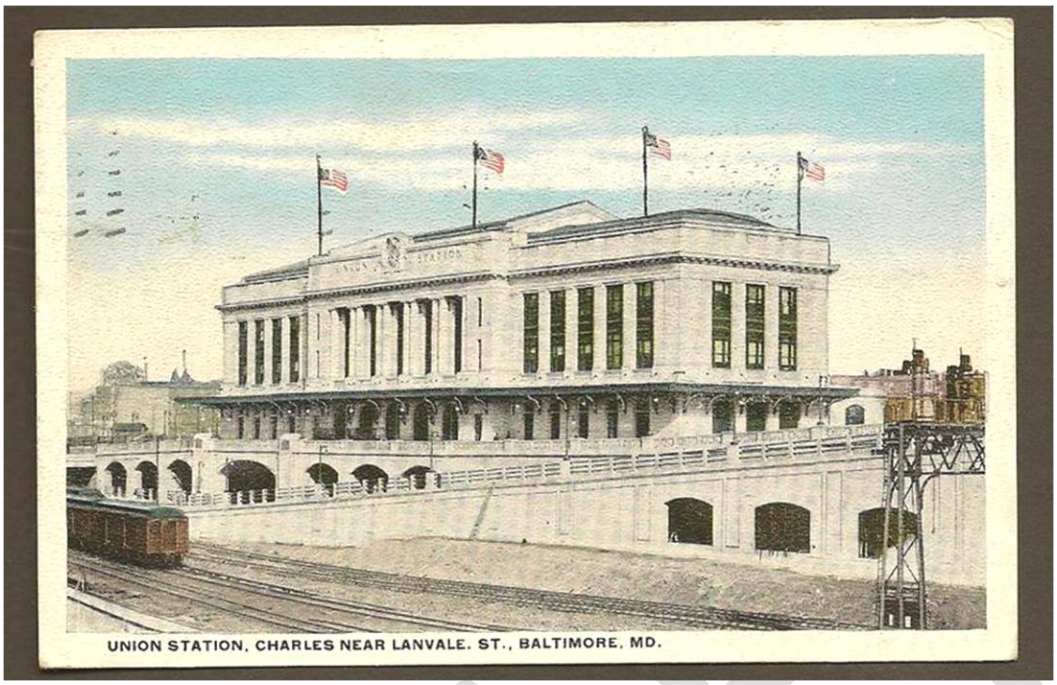


Image 1: 1916 Postcard of Pennsylvania Station, then named Union Station.

Image 2: View of Pennsylvania Station from Charles Street. Historic American Buildings Survey. https://www.loc.gov/item/md1234/.

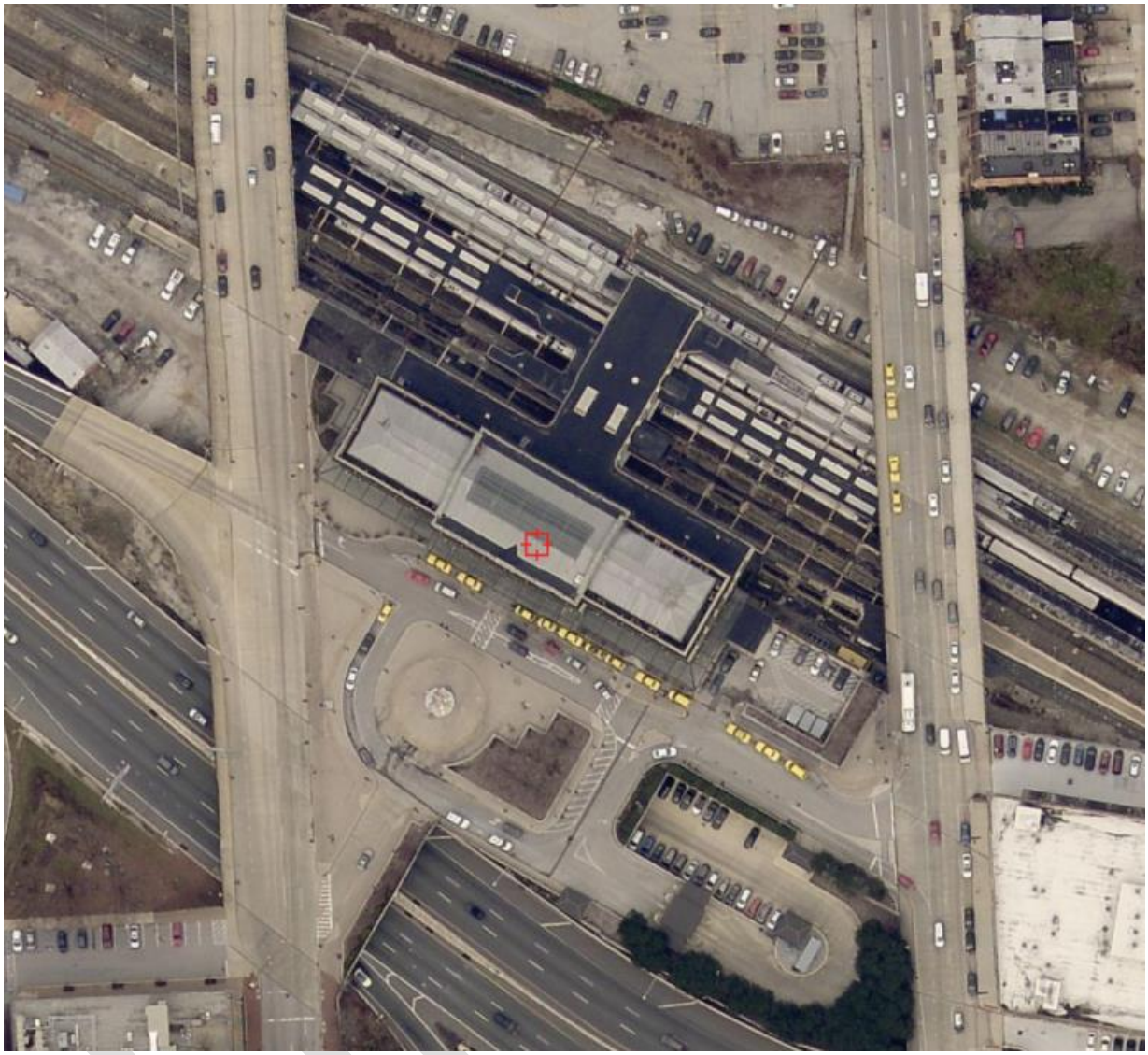


Image 3: Aerial photo of Pennsylvania Station and the train sheds. January 2019

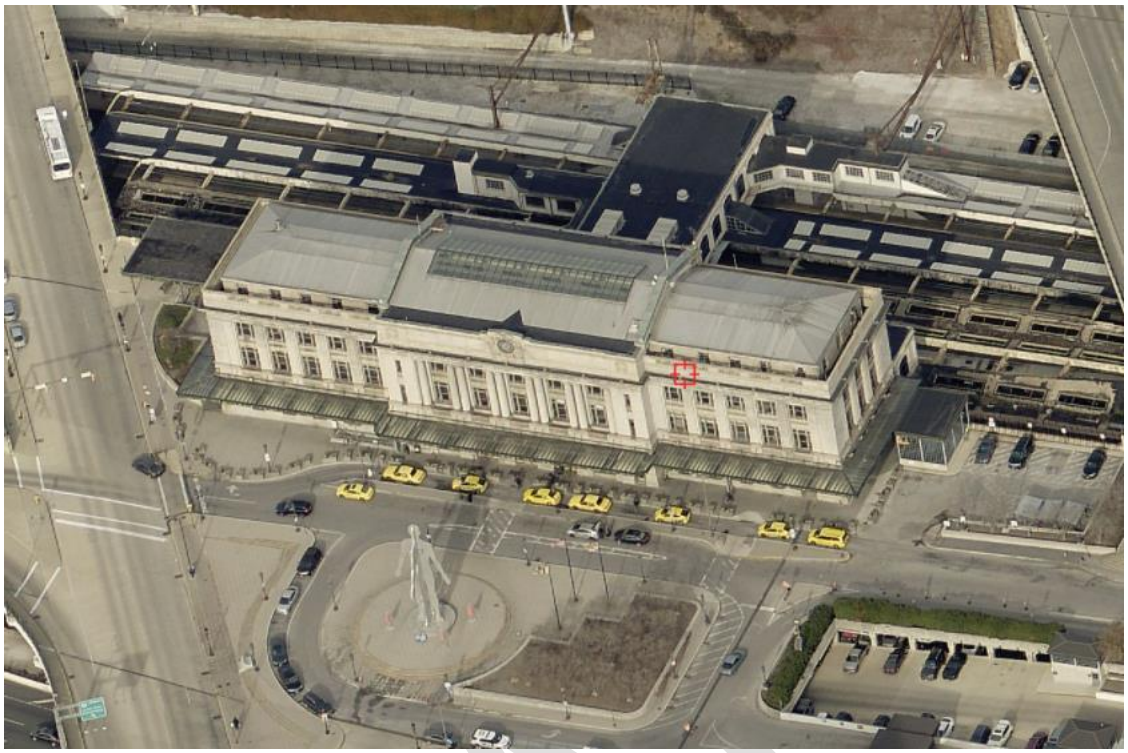


Image 4: Aerial view from south, showing the façade of the building. December 2019.

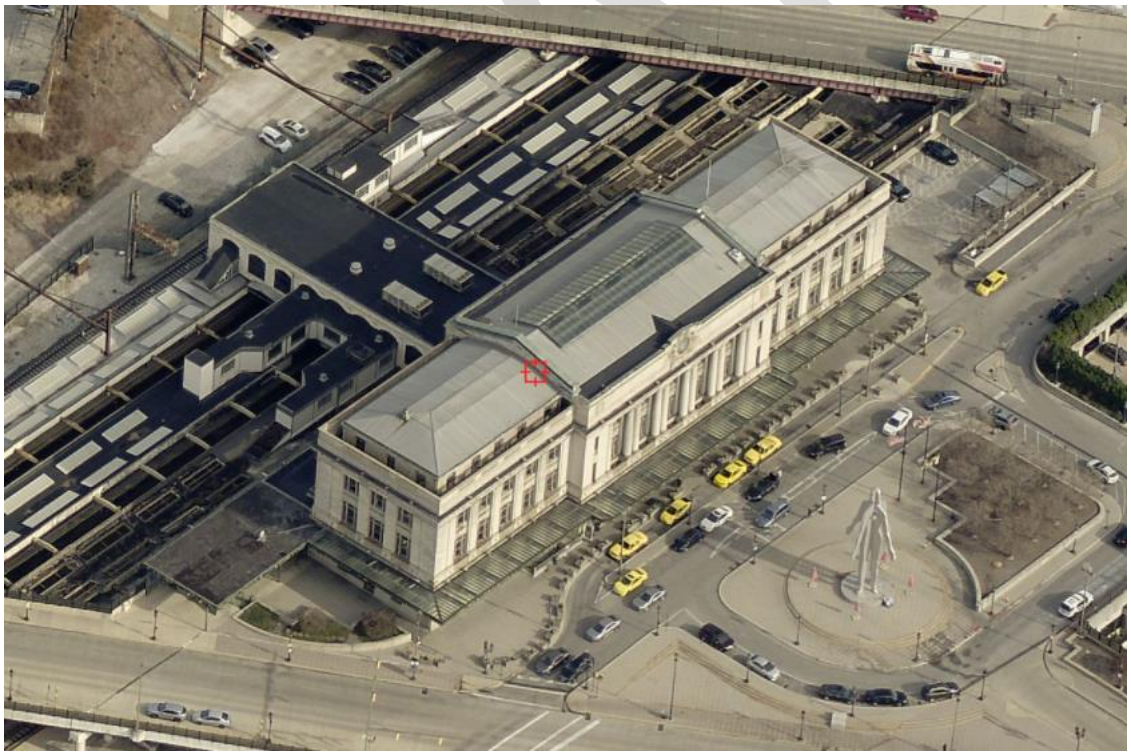


Image 5: Aerial view from west. December 2019.

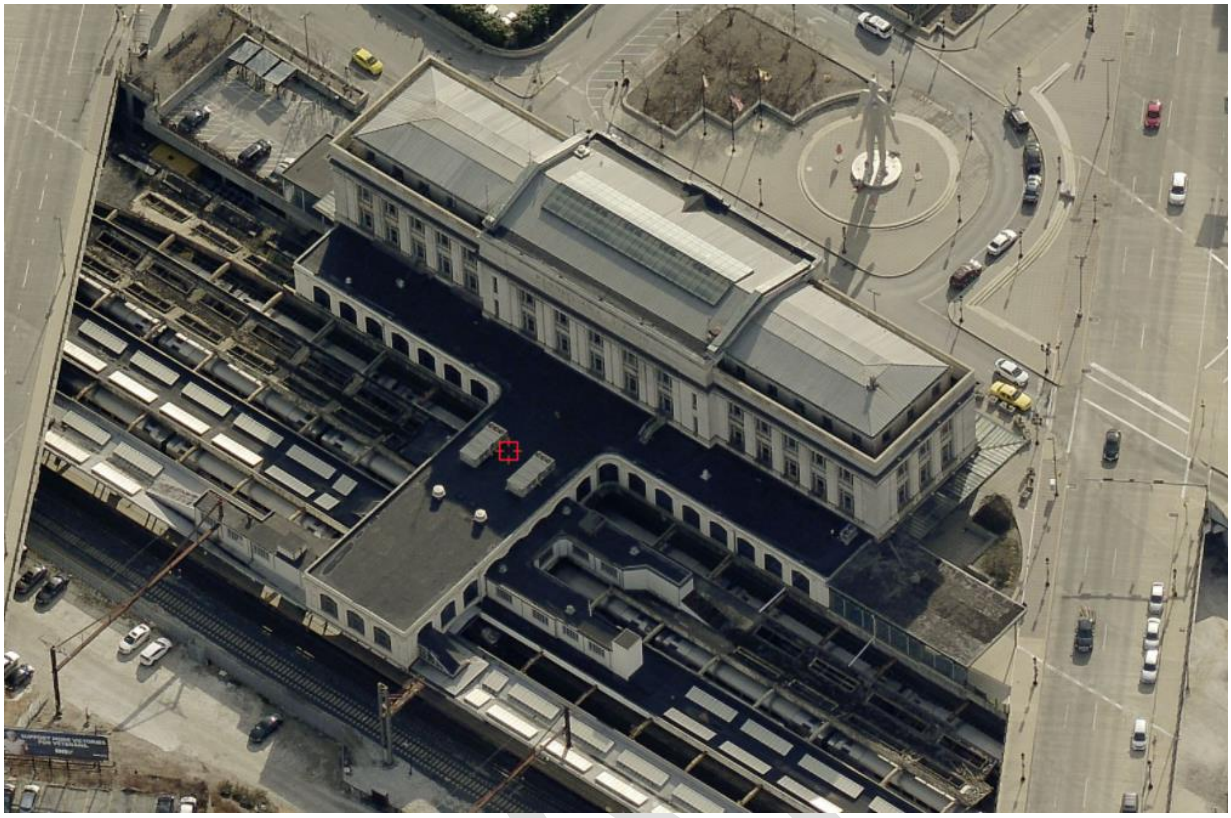


Image 6: Aerial view from north. December 2019.

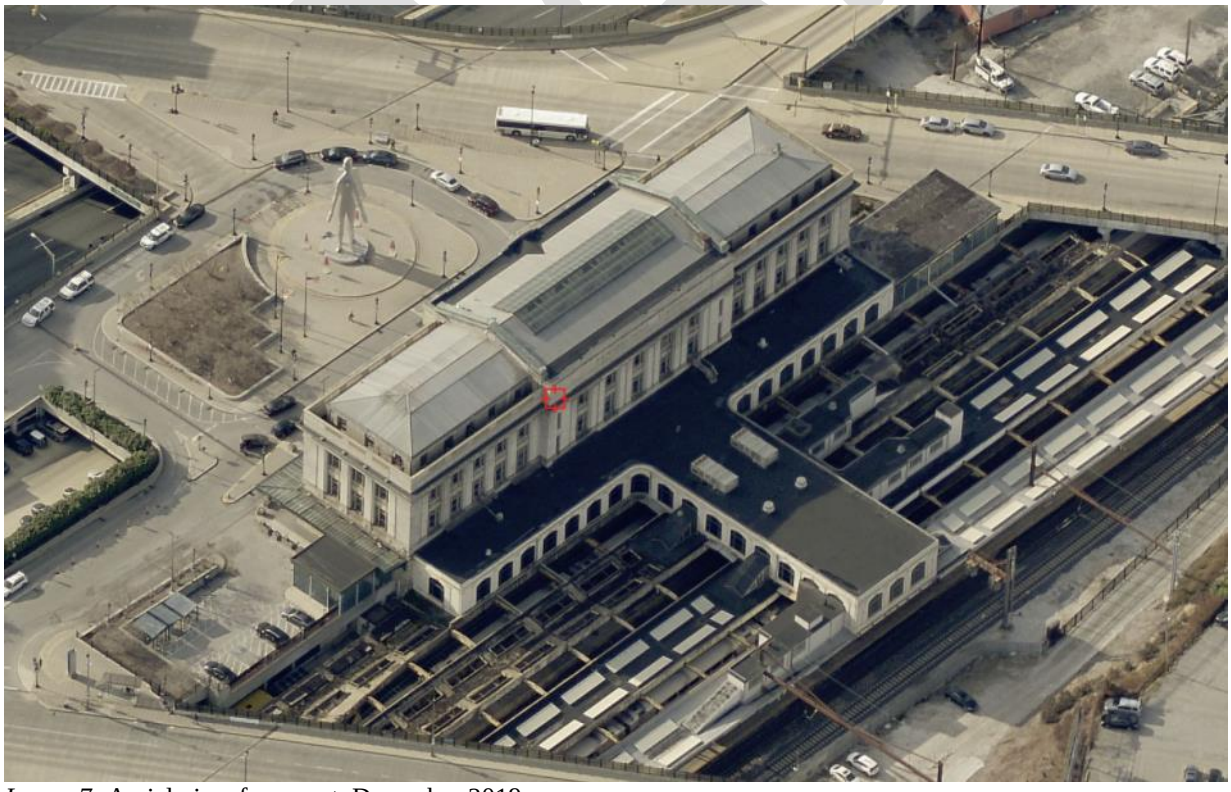


Image 7: Aerial view from east. December 2019.